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In 1826, Henriette Cornier, a poor girl who worked as a domestic servant, offered to look after a neighbor's nineteen-month-old daughter. She then took the child into a room, cut her head off with a large knife, and stayed with the corpse for a quarter of an hour. When the mother came looking for her daughter, Cornier nonchalantly told her that the girl was dead. The mother, unbelieving, tried to enter the room, but Cornier took the head, wrapped it in an apron, and threw it into the hallway. When the authorities later came to arrest Cornier, they asked her why she had done such a thing. "An idea," she said.[1]

Ideas, as evidenced in many early nineteenth-century texts, were coming to be seen as holding more and more power. As Michel Foucault points out in *Abnormal*, the eighteenth century saw the perverse idea join the perverse act as grounds for spoken or, in Protestant circles, written, confession.[2] This essay focuses on the strength of the repeated idea in a key Romantic text, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein*. The repeated idea, complete with its emotional connections, constituted what Romantic-era scientists and philosophers called a "ruling passion."[3] While Mary Shelley does write her novel about scientific and poetic power, she also, much like Joanna Baillie in her *Plays on the Passions*, conducts a psychological experiment on her protagonist, Victor Frankenstein. By subjecting Victor to what William Brewer calls an "obsessional ruling passion" and we might call simply "obsession," Shelley delineates both the variables that contribute to and the results that derive from this particular passion.

Scholars have contributed valuable psychoanalytic readings of Victor Frankenstein's various obsessions—be it the homosocial obsession with the creature, his filial obsession with his mother, or even his obsession with his father's lack of love.[4] However, as Brewer rightly argues, modern-day psychoanalysis does not square with the complex ways the Romantics conceived of the mind-brain. Therefore, this paper

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expands on Brewer's examination of the novel by reading Shelley's language alongside Romantic-era religious and medical texts. In doing so, I argue that *Frankenstein* reflects upon and attempts to understand the emerging psychological concept of obsession by examining the implications of David Hartley's theory of associationism, whether in the context of religious or scholarly "enthusiasm."

In 1816, as she was writing *Frankenstein*, Shelley read John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in which he discusses "the association of ideas."[5] Although one can—and, branching back to Aristotle's theories, does—associate ideas naturally, Locke also writes of ideas that "are roused and tumbled out of their dark cells into open daylight, by turbulent and tempestuous passions."[6] In a wonderfully Gothic image, Locke begins to explore ideas that "tumble" together haphazardly, but he never goes so far as to connect his idea of association with the brain. This more psychological form of associationism was coined by Hartley in his *Observations on Man*, a copy of which Percy Shelley owned, read, and annotated.[7] Sue Schopf convincingly connects Hartley's ideas of moral development to the creature, but I wish to make similar connections to the development of Victor and, to a lesser degree, the explorer Robert Walton. In Hartley's *Theory of the Human Mind, on the Principle of the Association of Ideas,* an abridgement of *Observations,* he explains that a sensation can produce an idea, which can then produce a successive idea (A → B → C). Importantly, sensations do not recall other sensations, but only the ideas associated with them. When associations derive from past associations, the effect becomes exponential.[8] Because, according to Hartley, every sensation produces a vibration of the mind, a complex series of associations revolving around the same object, "affecting one and the same part of the brain, in nearly one and the same manner, must irritate it at last, so as to enter the limits of pain, and approach to the states peculiar to fear, anxiety, despondency, peevishness, jealousy, and the rest of the tribe of hypochondriacal passions" (231). Therefore, if sensation causes vibration and association, then a string of fallacious associations would not only imprint itself on the mind in "one and the same manner," but would "irritate it," causing what we would now view as obsessive anxiety. This, writes Hartley, often happens when a person "applies himself to any one study, so as to fix his attention deeply on the ideas and terms belonging to it" (231). Clearly, the obsessive idea is important to Hartley, who, again in his *Observations on Man*, lists "the frequent recurrency of ideas in a course of study, or otherwise" as one of his six sub-types of "Imperfections in the Rational Faculty."[9]

When Victor applies himself only to study, or only to thinking about his creature, he illustrates this sort of Hartleian "irritation."

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was himself heavily influenced by Hartley and whose writings, chief among them "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," influenced Shelley's novel, writes that "without the imagination's synthesizing influence," association "becomes free-associationism, in which the mind fires away at will." Without this synthesis, Coleridge continues, "the fairest part of the most beautiful body will appear deformed and monstrous, if dissevered from its place in the organic Whole."[10] If, as philosophers like David Hume posited, the mind consists of a canvas on which various sensations, which build upon one another, form the "soul," these sensations can only be synthesized, made "organic," through the imagination. What happens, though, when the imagination, instead of synthesizing, merely adds to the cacophony of sensation? Significantly, Coleridge anthropomorphizes the imagination as a "body," calling the unsynthesized mind "deformed" and "monstrous," much like Victor's thoughts, which run away from him, ironically uncontrolled because they are so centered on one object.

Religious Enthusiasm

In describing Victor Frankenstein's unhealthy pursuit of knowledge, Mary Shelley uses the word "enthusiasm" eleven times. Almost from the beginning, when Victor begins reading Agrippa, Shelley connects this word to his obsessive pursuit, writing that he opens the book "with apathy; the theory which he attempts to demonstrate, and the wonderful facts which he relates, soon changed this feeling into *enthusiasm*."[11] Walton, too, feels his heart glow with an "enthusiasm that elevated [him] to heaven," and experiences the "enthusiasm of success" (53). Since Shelley uses the word so often, it is worthwhile to pause and consider its Romantic-era connotations. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), "enthusiasm" first meant "possession by a god, supernatural inspiration, prophetic or poetic frenzy; an occasion or manifestation of these."[12] As will be explored later in this essay, two of these words—possession and frenzy—recur in medical texts. Here, the conflation of "prophetic" and "poetic" are of note; while the latter would have had positive connotations, the former carried hints of extreme religiosity: of apocalyptic thinking gone awry. These religious connotations are only strengthened by the idea of "supernatural" inspiration or possession "by a god."

In eighteenth-century England, Methodism and other dissenting sects that privileged divine inspiration led to the word gaining a more negative connotation as "ill-regulated or misdirected religious emotion."[13] In other words, while enthusiasm may be characterized as generalized "madness," "mania," or "phrenzy"—these words are used interchangeably in Romantic-era psychological and medical texts—it is always characterized as a "ruling passion." It is the lack of "regulation," what Coleridge would call synthesis, that renders enthusiasm problematic. In his *Essay*, Locke even contrasts enthusiasm, which he calls "ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain," with Reason, that gift that Locke views as true divine revelation. The lack of "regulation," this "ungrounded"-ness, allows the "fancies of [the] brain," the imagination, to govern uncontrolled.[14]

As Shelley's novel progresses, the word "enthusiasm" takes on an increasingly negative connotation. When he begins to create the creature, Victor muses that unless he "had been animated by an almost supernatural *enthusiasm*, my application to this study would have been irksome, and almost intolerable" (78). Here, Shelley not only describes Victor's "application," the "object of assiduous attention," but she connects it to spirituality, calling it a "supernatural," or otherworldly, "enthusiasm." Afterwards, looking back on his experiment, Victor associates his enthusiasm with "frenzy," or madness: "During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment" (173). In his 1772 *Institutions of Medicine*, William Cullen defined frenzy as "an inflammation of the parts contained in the cavity of the cranium [that . . .] may affect either the membranes of the brain, or the substance of the brain tissues."[15] Thus Shelley leads her readers from enthusiasm to frenzy, asking the reader to pathologize this state of mind.

Like Shelley herself, medical writers of the time attempted to understand how the brain responded to an obsessive ruling passion, in this case enthusiasm. Much like Coleridge writing about unsynthesized imagination, William Duff believed that enthusiasm stemmed from "an overheated and distempered Imagination" and led to "weakness, superstition, and Madness."[16] This sense of the "overheated" imagination echoes Cullen's medical definition of frenzy, the "inflammation" of the brain tissues. And this association of enthusiasm and madness was not an abstract one; William Black, a London physician, reported that ten percent of those admitted to Bethlem Hospital (Bedlam) suffered from "Religion and Methodism."[17]

Not only does Shelley depict enthusiasm as a form of madness, but she also incorporates the idea that, until the eighteenth century, "fanaticism" or "madness" was not usually possession by God, but by the devil. If the word "enthusiasm" would have immediately conjured the notion of Methodism—and madness—to Shelley's readers, these notions would also have been connected with a belief in demonic possession; again, one may note that the word "demon" occurs eight times in the novel, the word "devil" fourteen. They all describe either early experiments or the creature himself.

Demonic possession brings us to the origins of the word "obsession." Its first use, in 1548, was as "the action of besieging a place," and this place could include the human soul.[18] "Obsessio," a term used by the exorcist Johann Joseph Gassner in 1774, was related to sorcery.[19] According to Erik Midelfort's perceptive study, "long after witchcraft ceased to trouble the waking and sleeping hours of most Europeans, demons and the devil were taught to be independently active in this world."[20] If one's heart was "pure" and demons could not completely "possess" him, they could still "obsess" him (or her), causing physical ailments.[21]

As Diane Hoeveler argues in *Gothic Riffs*, the supernatural did not immediately become secularized or even pathologized. Hoeveler convincingly asserts that, when "nature" displaces the supernatural, we are left with the uncanny, the inexplicable: the "demonic." "But," she writes, "rather than force people to choose exclusive allegiance to either the immanent order or the transcendent, the rise of ambivalent secularization actually allowed modern Europeans to inhabit an imaginative space in which both the material (science and reason) and the supernatural (God and the devil) coexisted as equally powerful explanatory paradigms."[22] This uncomfortable co-existence, this back-and-forth, reveals itself in the patterns (what Hoeveler calls "riffs") of the Gothic. It is this back-and-forth that attempts to, in Locke's words, "regulate" the modern subject, and that subject is contingent upon "control of the body with its concomitant issues—fertility, wellness, aging, and death."[23] I would add that, as the Romantic mind becomes embodied, philosophers, medical men, and priests attempt to "control" it by deciphering or understanding it. Yet, at the same time, they often maintain supernatural belief systems, the two of which persist in an uneasy, uncanny limbo.[24]

During the eighteenth century, many publications attempted to negotiate this limbo by combining a belief in demonic possession with a brain-based interpretation of mental illness. Dispensing advice for

spiritual counselors, priest John Baptist Scaramelli also wrote about the importance of restraining and controlling the intellectual appetite, writing that the overwrought appetite "obeys the imagination rather than the will; nor does the imagination pay ready obedience to the commands of the will when this forbids it to dally with unlawful objects, or when it employs all due diligence in turning away the imagination."[25] This is what we would expect from religious discourse: a focus on the will as a means to retrain the imagination, to "turn [it] away" before it became subsumed with "unlawful" objects. It is edifying to reflect on what Scaramelli might mean by "unlawful." As a priest, he would have conceived of the word as tinged with implications of immorality and sin, but he also implies that "lawful" thoughts need to be communal, understood by a social body.[26]

Yet, writing about what we would now call obsession, Scaramelli appears much more sympathetic to the idea of "unlawful" thoughts being the product of a mental disorder. He writes that there are people so

> timorous, and of so delicate a conscience, that they feel great abhorrence to all impurity, and of every action in which a grievous sin may lurk . . . they arm themselves against such thoughts by interior acts, and not seldom also even by exterior gestures, such as shaking their heads, pressing their hands upon their bosoms, rolling their eyes strangely, and making other efforts no less prejudicial to the mind than to the body. And what is the result? The more these thoughts are driven away the more they return to the mind.[27]

Scaramelli recognized the great paradox: the more a person tries to drive out obsessive thoughts, the more they, like Frankenstein's creature, become a haunting presence.[28] This presence is not only, in many ways, akin to demonic possession, but it is embodied, in the sense that obsession causes bodily pain.

Shelley goes to great lengths to illustrate the physiological results of a mental disorder. In doing so, she returns to Hartley, who expands on his doctrine of associationism to include muscular movements: "If any sensation A, idea B [b], or muscular motion C [γ], be associated for a sufficient number of times with any other sensation D, idea E [e], or muscular motion F[Φ], it will at last excite d, the simple idea belonging to the sensation D."[29] I quote this to emphasize that "muscular motions" (Greek letters) can be associated with sensations, as can ideas (the lowercase letters), but one would not experience the sensation D, only the ideas and "muscular motions" correspondent with it.

Perhaps the most famous example of "muscular motions" in Shelley's novel is the passage in which Victor describes his own physiognomy as he undertakes his famous experiment. His cheek, he recalls, had "grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement . . . . [W]ith unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding places . . . . [M]y limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with remembrance, but then a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, led me forward" (82). Almost every clause here connects a feeling with a body part: his cheek "grow[s] pale," his limbs "tremble," his eyes "swim" with tears, and his entire body feels "unrelaxed," "breathless," and "frantic." Here, we see Victor's "enthusiasm" manifesting itself in a bodily manner. In this way, religion becomes re-explained as physiology and, later, as psychology.

Early Psychology: The Birth of Obsession

Materialist thinkers, the early psychiatrists, conceived of obsession as "monomania," a term first coined in 1815, three years before Shelley's work, by J. G. Spurzheim. This term was defined as a "fixed idea," a "single pattern of repetitive and intrusive thoughts or actions."[30] Yet even after the coining of the term, other terms were still used in its stead, the most common being "phrenzy," "mania," "scruples," or even "melancholy." By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the notion of obsession was becoming more clearly delineated from other forms of "insanity." Part of this move was related to the rise of materialism and an interest in mapping the brain. Proto-psychologists like Jean Esquirol, Sir William Lawrence, Thomas Arnold, William Battie, and of course David Hartley, all located obsession in the brain, either as an "original" or "consequential" illness.[31] Interestingly, this monomania does not involve the entire brain and only produces partial delirium. After all, one of the "fibres" of the brain would merely have become, as Esquirol argues, "out of tune" and "inharmonious," thereby affecting other parts of the brain as well.[32] This notion of stretching and tuning, of the brain as a delicate, connected string instrument, appears again and again in contemporary psychological literature. Physician Samuel Tissot wrote that the most affected were those who "dwell too long upon one and the same thought; for thus one part of the sensorium being longer stretch'd than the rest, without ever being reliev'd by the others in their turn, is the sooner broke."[33] This "tightness" or "stretching" was importantly not confined to the "insane," those who were

considered less than human. Instead, anyone, but especially authors, could "dwell too long upon one" thought.

Victor Frankenstein has become associated with this pattern, earning the moniker of the "obsessed scientist."[34] When he reads Paracelsus and Agrippa, he tells Walton that "natural philosophy . . . became nearly my sole occupation" (77). In fact, Victor criticizes his brother Ernest, who doesn't have his "habits of application" and is always "in the open air, climbing the hills, or rowing on a lake" (77). Over and over again, Shelley uses the word "application" to imply study and work, the "object of assiduous attention."[35] For instance, Victor calls his imagination "vivid, yet my powers of analysis and application were intense" (233). This "yet" is telling; analysis and application in this sentence *detract* from the efficacy of the imagination. If the will, so important to philosophers like Kant and Descartes, allowed for what Newton called "diligent application and perseverance," that will could easily become subsumed by "appetite."[36] French naturalist René Antoine Ferchalt de Réamur, for instance, looked so intently and diligently at maggots that they became "marvels" to "rival fairy tales and *The Thousand and One Nights*."[37] When moralists wrote about these observational regimes, they "reproached [the scientists] for self-indulgence and a lack of moderation, for appetites run amok."[38]

According to these philosophers and proto-psychologists, uncontrolled appetite or imagination can affect both the mind and the body. Johann Heinroth foreshadows Shelley's novel when he writes that "misdirected research into the deepest mysteries of nature" results in insomnia, loss of appetite, and tiredness.[39] In William Black's 1810 *Dissertation on Insanity*, illustrated with 3,000 cases from Bedlam, "study" was one of the causes of monomania. In his 1779 *Methods of Cure in Some Particular Cases of Insanity*, medical practitioner William Perfect writes that he treated a man who had "long applied to intense study, and rigidly denied himself those relaxations, which a mind like his so greatly stood in need of, as a temporary relief and refreshment from the immoderate fatigue of intellectual researches"; his complaints include "anxiety [and] watchfulness" similar to Victor's "unrelaxed eagerness."[40] Perfect goes on to describe "excessive difficulty of breathing ensuing, constrictions of the external parts, with slight shiverings, and a stupor . . . which ended in a confirmed delirium; his mouth was distorted, he raved, was confined, and my advice thought necessary; I found the pulse full, great and quick; the countenance flushed and inflated, and the eyes wild and protuberant."[41] Here, psychological anxiety caused by "intense study" results in difficulty breathing, shivering, a distorted mouth, a quick pulse, a flushed face, and "protuberant" eyes.

This discourse seems eerily familiar as we see Victor's body change throughout the book. Not only does he not realize the passage of seasons, but every night he feels a "slow fever," and calls himself "anxious to a most painful degree" (84). On the night of the creature's creation, this anxiety "almost amounted to agony" (84). During his nightmare on the eve of his creation, "a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed" (85). Again, Shelley refers to the feverish quality and spasmodic movements (the word "convulsion" is common) often assigned to frenzy. She pays special attention to Victor's pulse; he says that it "beat so quickly and hardly, that I felt the palpitation of every artery" (86); that his "heart palpitated in the sickness of fear"; and that he "felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse beat rapidly" (87). The tingling flesh, the beating pulse, the slow fever, and the chattering teeth all illustrate the feverish, overdrawn qualities associated, by writers like Heinroth, with what we would now call obsession.

Monstrous Associationism and the Science of the Mind

Many critics have commented on Victor's need to create; less studied are Victor's fears after the creature's creation, when the image of the creature overwhelms Victor's imagination: "I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view" (86). Victor here tells Walton not that he did seek to avoid the "wretch," but that he paces *as if* he sought to avoid the wretch. This seemingly slight semantic difference moves the scene from the realm of the Gothic to the realm of the imagination, specifically to many of the fears connected with associationism. Shelley's textual hints lead us to wonder how much of Victor's fear of the creature is due to the deformity of the creature himself, and how much of it spawns from an irrationally obsessive, uncontrolled imagination.

Shelley furthers this emphasis on the unsynthesized imagination by, in this same part of the text, having Victor quote from Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Like the mariner, Victor sees himself as

> one who, on a lonely road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> And, having once turn'd round, walks on,
> And turns no more his head;
> Because he knows a frightful fiend
> Doth close behind him tread. (85)

This poem is its own tale of obsession, and critics have studied it in terms of religion and guilt over imperialism. Shelley, who listened to Coleridge read the poem to her father in 1806, was clearly influenced by it. She connects the Mariner to Robert Walton, who writes his sister that "I am going to unexplored regions, to 'the land of mist and snow;' but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be alarmed for my safety" (55). This, as Michelle Levy points out, is ironic. Although Walton indeed kills no albatross, his poor leadership leads to the death of several of his crewmembers and, indeed, threatens his safety and that of others. Walton's potential downfall, like Victor's, has to do with his uncontrolled imagination. When he describes his early childhood reading, he tells Victor that his daydreams "want (as the painters call it) *keeping*" (53). While the modern-day reader is tempted to read "keeping" as a form of containment, the *OED* actually defines it as the "maintenance of the proper relation between the representations of nearer and more distant objects in a picture."[42] A better description of both Walton's and Victor's disorders, then, might be a want of perspective. They cannot, to put it colloquially, "see the forest for the trees" because, in their brains, the trees (the expedition, scientific knowledge, or the creature himself) have taken on an undue importance. Thus, the "frightful fiend" in Coleridge's poem about an obsessed mariner, like Walton, becomes related to the "fiend" Victor continuously imagines until, without any knowledge of him, he is convinced of his monstrosity.

Shelley's language emphasizes this point. Even before the murder of William, Victor alludes to the creature as a "spectre" (88, 89). Even though a "spectre" is an apparition, a phantom, or a ghost, it also meant, at this time, "an object or source of dread or terror" or "a phantasm of the brain."[43] The latter situates the "phantasm" inside the brain, not outside in the creature himself. Again, this is "obsessio": like an act of sorcery, the form of the creature has infiltrated Victor's sensations, including his sight: "the form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was for ever before my eyes" (89). Lest Shelley's readers think that this is a natural response to an unnatural creative act, Victor makes it a point to use the language of madness, telling Walton that he "raved incessantly concerning him" (89).

Like Coleridge's "deformed" and "monstrous" associationism, Victor's ideas gain such power over him that they require no logical synthesis or proof. When he sees the creature highlighted by the lightning at Mont Blanc, he immediately "knows" that he murdered William, giving as proof the fact that "the mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof" (103). Like the "idea" of the creature, this

idea (although eventually proven true) gains power merely through its presence.

Later, when Kirwin, the magistrate who nurses Victor to health, tells him that a "friend" has come to visit, Victor immediately responds: "I know not by what chain of thought the idea presented itself, but it instantly darted into my mind that the murderer had come to mock at my misery" (204). Here we have a clear description of the associative process: the "chain of thought," prompted by a chain of sensations, leads to an idea which "instantly darted into" Victor's mind. This idea gains so much power over Victor that he shudders to see his visitor, who turns out to be his own father. Again, we have a Romantic disconnect between what should be reasonable and what the uncontrolled imagination can do. Scaramelli, writing about "scruples," contrasts "reasons" with "appearances, fancies, and frivolous motives." "Far from leaving our assent suspended," he writes, scrupulosity "inclines us to judge that there is grievous sin where in fact there is not the slightest fault. Besides which, scruples fill the mind with fears, anxiety, disquiet, harassing disturbance; none of which effects follow upon reasonable doubt."[44] These phrases, "reasonable doubt" (Scaramelli) and "irresistible proof" (Shelley), imply an almost legalistic method of policing or controlling the monstrous imagination.

In addition to showing us that Victor's response to the creature is irrational and indicates a diseased imagination, Shelley also illustrates that, like many mental illnesses, obsession turns the sufferer inward. After Victor receives the letter from Alphonse detailing William's death, he never once thinks about Alphonse's fatherly grief. Instead, he only views events from his own perspective, looking at the beauty of the mountains, lake, and sky and asking if they "prognosticate peace, or . . . mock at [his] unhappiness?" (101). Even more disturbing is the fact that, after Victor destroys the creature's mate and the creature says "I will be with you on your wedding night" (a phrase that reverberates in Shelley's text), Victor thinks "In that hour I should die, and at once satisfy and extinguish his malice" (193). Immediately, "I will be with you" becomes "I should die," and again, this idea assumes such force that Victor cannot think differently. The same idea—that the creature plans to kill him on his wedding night—occupies Victor's waking thoughts as well as his dreams. In one scene, he experiences a "kind of night-mare; I felt the fiend's grasp in my neck, and could not free myself from it; groans and cries rung in my ears" (207). Victor's obsessive vision of his own death keeps him from seeing other alternatives, including the death of his fiancée Elizabeth. He even

states that death "was no evil to me, if the loss of Elizabeth were balanced with it," but he does not—he cannot—consider that it is exactly the "loss of Elizabeth" that the creature has planned (214).[45] Victor's obsession, here with the idea of the creature killing him, has become a process of associationism gone awry, to the exclusion and damage of those around him.

Conclusion

By closely observing Shelley's word choices, one can decipher the discourses of both religious enthusiasm and materialist proto-psychology in her novel. Furthermore, Victor's character development leaves no question in the reader's mind that unsynthesized associations produce enthusiasm, whether religious or scholarly, which overwhelms the sufferer until it controls him. By the time Walton sees Victor, he claims never to have seen a "more interesting creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness . . . [H]e is generally melancholy and despairing; and sometimes he gnashes his teeth, as if impatient of the weight of woes that oppresses him" (58). Here, again, Shelley's word choice is telling. Victor is, significantly, called a "creature" and described in an animalistic fashion. Much like his own creation, Victor "gnashes his teeth" (119). Shelley's use of "wildness," "madness," and "melancholy" makes his condition clear. When Walton first sees Victor, he lacks all moderation, control, or "synthesis," and his brain has been consumed by his thoughts.

While it is easy to point to the creature as the "uncanny" caused by what Hoeveler convincingly argues is an overlap of the secular and scientific, I argue that the "uncanny" is within Victor himself: his enthusiastic, over-stretched mind. It is in this space of the mind—or what used to be called the soul—that the negotiations between imaginative enthusiasm, dangerous enthusiasm, and obsession occur. Thus the mind itself becomes an uncanny space: a site of possibility but also a site of fear. It is in this space that the infinite possibility of the imagination becomes possessed by one single idea until, stretched past the brink, it becomes monstrous.

NOTES

1. Foucault, *Abnormal*, Kindle location 1869.

2. To gauge the validity of Foucault's idea, one need only to think about the popularity of these texts, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* and Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.

3. In *Phrenology: Of the Doctrine of the Mental Phenomena*, J. G. Spurzheim writes that "A youth in love, and a fanatic in religion, sacrifice the rest to their passion, and do harm" (53).

4. See Veeder, "Negative Oedipus"; Dussinger, "Kinship and Guilt"; Hill, "*Frankenstein* and the Physiognomy of Desire"; Hirsch, "The Monster Was a Lady"; and Levine, "*Frankenstein* and the Tradition."

5. For Mary Shelley's reading list, see Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, eds., *Journals of Mary Shelley: 1814–1844*, 659. See Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 584.

6. Qtd. in Warren, *History*, 37.

7. Schopf, "Of What a Strange Nature."

8. Hartley, *Hartley's Theory*, 16. Further citations of this work are given in the text.

9. Berrios, "David Hartley's Views," 110–11.

10. Qtd. in Faflak, *Romantic Psychoanalysis*, 57.

11. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 67–68 (emphasis mine). Further citations of this work are given in the text.

12. "enthusiasm, n."

13. "enthusiasm, n."

14. Romantic enthusiasm was not necessarily a negative quality; indeed, many of Mary Shelley's heroines exhibit an enthusiasm that becomes ultimately liberating. Lisa Vargo, writing about Shelley's later novels, links Shelley's notions of female enthusiasm to William Godwin's notion of perfectibility and to political liberation. She cites the Shelleys' contact with Italian *improvisatore*, performers moved by inspiration and enthusiasm to produce extemporary poems, as an influence on Mary Shelley's notion of the creative process. Yet Vargo—and, I would argue, Shelley—clearly distinguishes between the type of enthusiasm that "dissolve[s] the self" and "egocentric" enthusiasm. I would argue that it is this latter type, typically a male phenomenon in Mary Shelley's world, that Victor Frankenstein embodies.

15. Qtd. in Foucault, *History of Madness*, 259.

16. Duff, *Essay on Original Genius*, 170.

17. See McInelly, "Method or Madness," 200.

18. "obsession, n."

19. Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, 55.

20. Midelfort, *Exorcism and Enlightenment*, 7.

21. Kallendorf, *Exorcism and Its Text*, 109.

22. Hoeveler, *Gothic Riffs*, 6.

23. Hoeveler, *Gothic Riffs*, 31.

24. According to Sigmund Freud's "original" definition, "An uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed" (Freud, "The Uncanny").

25. Scaramelli, *Directorium Asceticum*, 363.

26. Scaramelli's use of the word "unlawful" also brings us back to Foucault's argument, articulated in *Abnormal*, that the emerging field of psychology works hand in hand with the field of law as a form of "public hygiene" (Location 1961).

27. Scaramelli, *Directorium Asceticum*, 326.

28. This is well illustrated in a story told by Freud about a little boy who "had a disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and

throwing them away into a corner, under the bed, and so on" (Freud, "Beyond," 599). The boy seemed troubled each time one of these objects would disappear. Freud was perplexed. Here was a child creating his own distress. But upon further investigation, Freud discovered that the game had a second part. "Disappearance and return. At the outset he was in a passive situation—he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was…he took on an active part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery independent of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not" (Freud, "Beyond," 600). As Richard Brockman glosses this story: "The boy had thus become the author, albeit also the victim, of his distress" (Brockman, "Freud, Frankenstein," 31).

29. Qtd. in Warren, *History*, 54.

30. "monomania, n."

31. Even earlier, we find suggestions of the inherent nature of mental illness in the notion of "character." Scaramelli writes about scruples, blaming the tendency on "a melancholy, gloomy, timid, and anxious character. Scruples which derive their origin from this source are with difficulty cured; for, just as we cannot get rid of *our constitution*, so we ever bear within us the source of these diseased fancies, these groundless alarms, anxieties, and the like extravagances" (*Directorium Asceticum* 337, emphasis mine). While Scaramelli did not locate scrupulosity in the brain, he does locate it in the body, specifically in the "character" or "constitution."

32. Qtd. in Warren, 54.

33. Qtd. in Davis, *Obsession*, 65.

34. In her 1826 *The Last Man*, Mary Shelley would write about a similarly obsessed scientist: the astronomer Merrival. "This poor man, learned as La Place, guileless and unforeseeing as a child, had often been on the point of starvation, he, his pale wife and numerous offspring, while he neither felt hunger, nor observed distress. His astronomical theories absorbed him; calculations were scrawled with coal on the bare walls of his garret: a hard-earned guinea, or an article of dress, was exchanged for a book without remorse; he neither heard his children cry, nor observed his companion's emaciated form, and the excess of calamity was merely to him as the occurrence of a cloudy night, when he would have given his right hand to observe a celestial phenomenon" (Shelley, *Last Man*, 226). Shelley again puts her character within a scientific context, comparing him to the French mathematician and astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749–1827). Yet, aside from his learning, the rest of his being is like that of a "child." His wife is "pale," they live in a "garret," he himself feels no "hunger" or "distress." Like Victor, he ignores the needs of those around him, here his children's cries and his wife's hunger, all for the sake of his obsession, to observe a "celestial phenomenon." As he prophesies the end of the world, this character also links millenarianist religious movements with growing psychological curiosity.

35. "application, n."

36. Qtd. in Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 229.

37. Qtd. in Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 241.

38. Qtd. In Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 241.

39. Heinroth, *Textbook of Disturbances*, 225.

40. Perfect, *Methods of Cure*, 209–10.

41. Perfect, *Methods of Cure*, 211.

42. "keeping, n."

43. "spectre, n."

44. Scaramelli, *Directorium Asceticum*, 336.

45. As Michelle Levy points out, the chief difference between Victor and Walton is that Walton turns back partly because he is able to empathize with his sister. Here, I argue that Shelley intentionally parallels Walton's act of "reading" his sister with Victor's inability to read his sister-wife, Elizabeth.

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